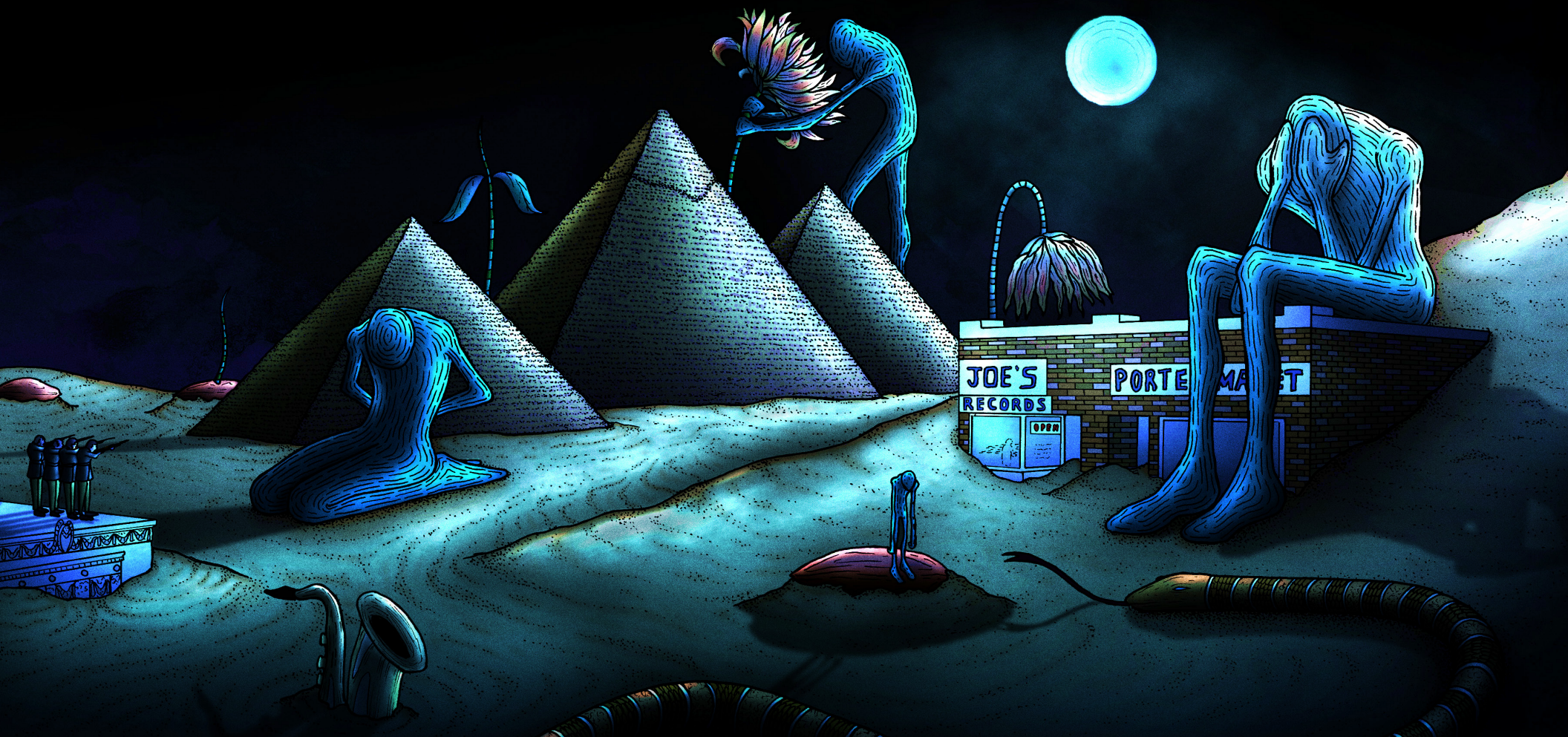
AKROPOLIS REED QUINTET

GHOST LIGHT



1 - 4. RITES FOR THE AFTERLIFE BY STACY GARROP (16:35)
- I. Inscriptions from the Book of the Dead (4:56)
- II. Passage through the Netherworld (4:52)
- III. The Hall of Judgement (2:55)
- IV. The Field of Reeds (3:52)

5 - 8. KINDS OF LIGHT BY MICHAEL GILBERTSON (8:45)
- I. Flicker (1:33)
- II. Twilight (2:34)
- III. Fluorescence (1:48)
- IV. Ultraviolet (2:50)

9. FIRING SQUAD BY NILOUFAR NOURBAKHSH (7:20)

10 - 12. SEED TO SNAG BY THEO CHANDLER (13:57)
- I. Sprout (7:00)
- II. Stretch (2:43)
- III. Sow (4:14)

13 - 19. HOMAGE TO PARADISE VALLEY BY JEFF SCOTT (33:07)
Poetry by Marsha Music precedes Mvts. I, II, & IV (6:03)
- I. Ghosts of Black Bottom (9:05)
- II. Hastings Street Blues (7:56)
- III. Roho, Pumzika Kwa Amani (Spirits, Rest Peacefully) (4:46)
- IV. Paradise Theater Jump! (5:17)

Total 79:44

Producers: Courtney Snyder Ng, Elliott Tackitt, Akropolis
Production Assistants: Thomas Morris
Recorded at First Presbyterian Church in Ypsilanti, MI & Tempermill Studios
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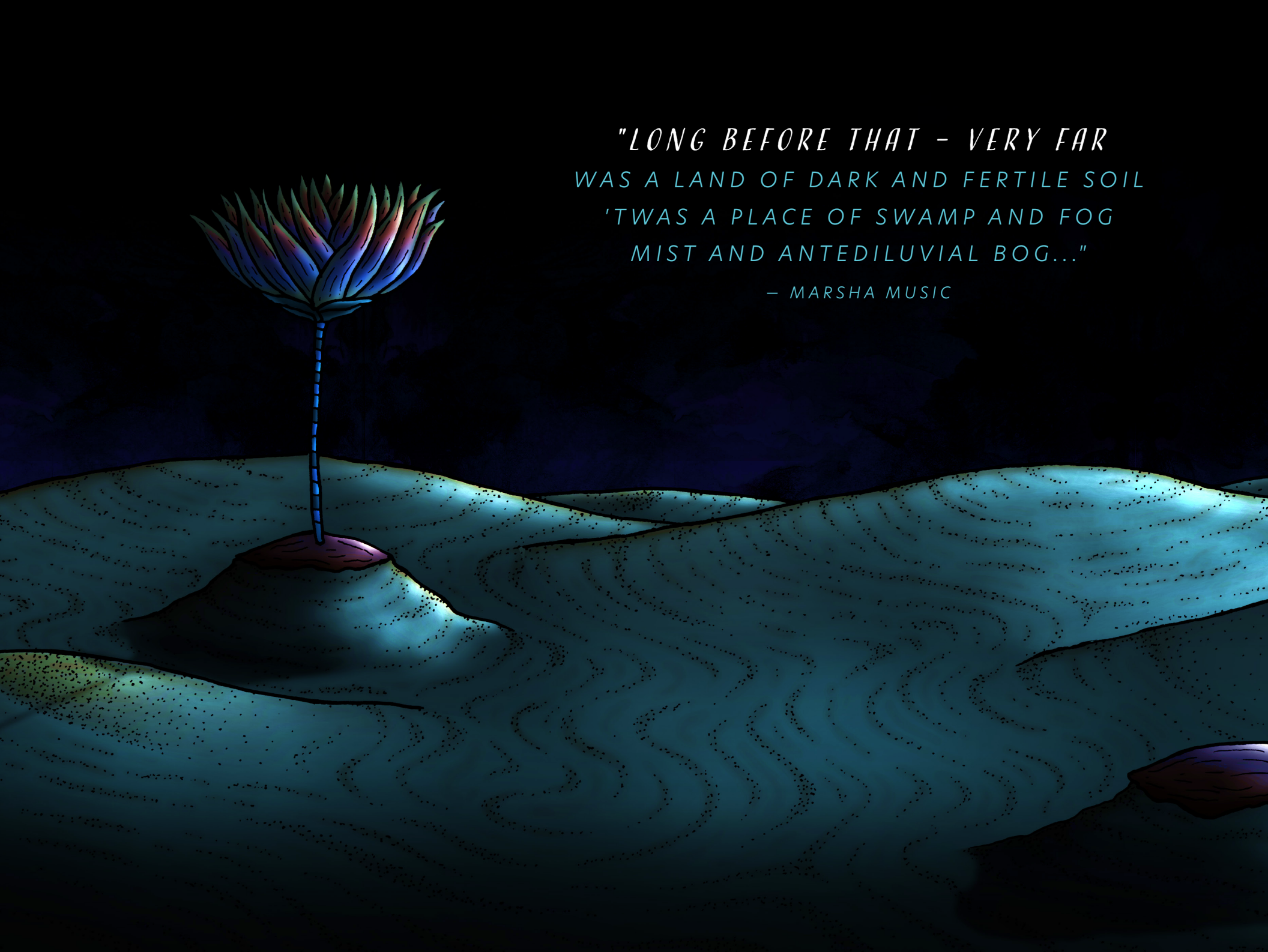
"LONG BEFORE THAT - VERY FAR
WAS A LAND OF DARK AND FERTILE SOIL
'TWAS A PLACE OF SWAMP AND FOG
MIST AND ANTEDILUVIAL BOG..."
– MARSHA MUSIC

ABOUT GHOST LIGHT

Over the past two years we've premiered a series of works dealing with life, death, and rebirth. With *Ghost Light*, we wanted to shine a light on ghosts around us, and help you embrace the beautiful cycle of life and death while recalling important moments and practices from our history. For us, some of that history was right beneath us, like the razing of several Black neighborhoods in Detroit in the 1900s. Other sounds composed for us describe deadly lakes of fire, heavenly fields of reeds, and the near-death adrenaline of facing a firing squad. Through these masterful works by composers of various backgrounds and experiences, we hope you are transformed into a ghostly and intoxicating world of dark and light, death and life — rebirth. *Ghost Light* is supported by the Alice M. Ditson Fund of Columbia University.

AKROPOLIS REED QUINTET

Tim Gocklin (oboe), Kari Landry (clarinet), Matt Landry (saxophone), Andrew Koeppe (bass clarinet), Ryan Reynolds (bassoon)

Celebrating over a decade of music making, the Akropolis Reed Quintet, with their "infallible musicality and huge vitality" *(Fanfare)*, has sparked a revolution in wind chamber music. An untamed band of 5 reed players and entrepreneurs, the members of Akropolis are united by a shared passion: to make new music that connects and reflects real people.

Akropolis delivers an average of 120 concerts and educational events nationwide each year; has premiered more than 130 works; runs an annual new music festival in Detroit called "Together We Sound"; is in residence at 3 Detroit high schools; and their third and latest album, *The Space Between Us*, was dubbed "pure gold" *(San Francisco Chronicle)*. Akropolis believes anyone can compose great music, and during their 20-21 season will premiere and record more than 30 works by youth aged 12-22, including 12 Detroit high school students. Generously supported by 200+ donors and foundations nationwide, Akropolis is a 7-time winner of America's foremost chamber music prizes including the 2014 Fischoff Gold Medal, and was founded at the University of Michigan in 2009.

RITES FOR THE AFTERLIFE BY STACY GARROP

Commissioned by the Barlow Endowment on behalf of the Akropolis Reed Quintet, Calefax Reed Quintet, and the Brigham Young University Reed Quintet (2018)

As the average lifespan of an Egyptian hovered around 30 years, living past the death of one's physical body was a legitimate concern. Egyptians believed that upon death, their soul would undertake a harrowing journey through the Netherworld. *Rites for the Afterlife* follows the path of the soul to the afterlife.

In movement 1, the soul leaves the body and begins the journey, protected by spells and incantations written on the tomb's walls. In movement 2, the soul is now on a funerary barque, being towed through the Netherworld and encountering demons, serpents, crocodiles, lakes of fire, and other terrors. In movement 3, the soul stands before forty-two divine judges in the "Hall of Judgement" and gives a negative confession connected to each judge, (e.g. "I did not rob," etc.). Then the soul's heart is weighed on a scale against a feather from Maat, the goddess of truth. If balanced, the soul moves on. The "Field of Reeds" (movement 4) is a perfect mirror image of the soul's life in Egypt. The soul reunites with deceased family members, makes sacrifices to the Egyptian gods and goddesses, harvests crops from plentiful fields of wheat under a brilliant blue sky, and lives forever next to the abundant and nourishing waters of the Nile.

KINDS OF LIGHT BY MICHAEL GILBERTSON

Commissioned by Akropolis and the I-Park Foundation (2018)

Kinds of Light takes each reed quintet instrument as a color or pigment. When combined in various combinations, textures, and layers, they come together to illustrate kinds of light. Unlike other works on the album, much of *Kinds of Light* is homophonic, moving these colors at the same time and in the same rhythm. Otherwise, clear layers are present and serve as foils, such as the melody of the saxophone, oboe, and bassoon in "Ultraviolet" against the clarinet and bass clarinet engine. "Twilight" is completely homophonic, with no rhythm variance between instruments, but rich in harmonic development and detail which is therefore more apparent and appreciable.

FIRING SQUAD BY NILOUFAR NOURBAKHSH

Commissioned by Akropolis and the I-Park Foundation (2018)

"Many years later, as he faced the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendia was to remember that distant afternoon his father took him to discover ice."
—Gabriel Garcia Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*

The compelling opening of Márquez's masterpiece constructs an intense moment of reflection by digging into a childhood memory. *Firing Squad* is structurally inspired by this sentence. The piece explores an instance of confronting death, then expands into all possible feelings and memories one might go through before saying farewell to life. Nourbakhsh utilizes a recording of Akropolis for Akropolis to play along with, adjusted for effect, to act as a mirror of Akropolis' live, acoustic sounds.

SEED TO SNAG BY THEO CHANDLER

Commissioned by Akropolis and the I-Park Foundation (2018)

The three movements of *Seed to Snag* describe periods between the beginning and end of the lifecycle of organic matter, that is between the seed and the snag. Chandler looks to the Baroque era for his structure, the 1st movement imitating the slow appearance of limbs and other plant parts using the musical style of a Baroque prelude, with a heavily-ornamented, slow-moving harmony. The 2nd movement is a virtuosic bassoon solo recalling a Baroque aria with harpsichord accompaniment with the other instruments in the quintet resonating from the bassoon's pitches. The 3rd movement focuses on consistent pulse and imitation as the seeds spin and spread from the tree in rapid succession, closing with material that ignites a new beginning of the cycle.

HOMAGE TO PARADISE VALLEY BY JEFF SCOTT

Commissioned by Akropolis and Chamber Music America, madepossible by the Chamber Music America Classical Commissioning Program, with generous funding provided by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation (2019)

The historical content of these notes by the composer is provided courtesy of the Detroit Historical Society (detroithistorical.org) where one can find a wealth of information on Paradise Valley and Black Bottom. Poetry by Marsha Music—a lifelong resident of Detroit whose father, Joe Von Battle, was a record producer for Aretha Franklin and owned Joe's Records, central to the Black Bottom community—was commissioned by Akropolis in 2020 to create poetry to accompany Jeff's music.

Black Bottom was a predominantly Black neighborhood in Detroit, Michigan. In the early 20th century, African-American residents became concentrated here during the first wave of the Great Migration to northern industrial cities. Informal segregation operated in the city kept them in this area of older, less expensive housing. Black Bottom/Paradise Valley became known for its African-American residents' significant contributions to American music, including Blues, Big Band, and Jazz, from the 1930s to 1950s. Black Bottom was eventually razed and redeveloped for various urban renewal projects, driving the residents out. By the 1960s the neighborhood ceased to exist.

Hastings Street ran north-south through Black Bottom and had been a center of Eastern European Jewish settlement before World War I, but by the 1950s, migration transformed the strip into one of Detroit's major African-American communities of black-owned businesses, social institutions, and nightclubs.

From the Bantu language of Swahili, "Roho, Pumzika kwa Amani" (Spirits, Rest Peacefully) is a lullaby, my humble offering to the many souls who came before me and persevered through the middle passage, decades of slavery, disenfranchising laws, and inequality. I am who I am because of those who stood before me. May their spirits rest peacefully.

Orchestra Hall closed in 1939, but reopened in 1941 as the Paradise Theater. For 10 years it would then offer the best of African-American musicians from around the country. "Paradise Theater Jump" is dedicated to the famed theater and harkens to the up-tempo style of "jump blues," usually played by small groups and featuring saxophone or brass instruments.

ALBUM ARTWORK BY ASHTON SPRINGER

Ashton Springer is an Artist and Illustrator born and Artistically Educated in the UK. He studied and obtained his Bachelor of arts degree in Graphic Design & Illustration in the autumn of 2012. From then on, he embarked on a journey to curate and fine tune his artistic voice and continues to push the boundaries of his craft till this very day.

STACY GARROP

Stacy Garrop's music is centered on dramatic and lyrical storytelling, and she shares these stories by taking audiences on sonic journeys. Garrop is a full-time freelance composer. She has received numerous awards including an Arts and Letters Award in Music from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, Fromm Music Foundation Grant, Barlow Prize, and three Barlow Endowment commissions. Notable commissions include *The Battle for the Ballot* for the Cabrillo Festival Orchestra, *Goddess Triptych* for the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, *Glorious Mahalia* for the Kronos Quartet, *Give Me Hunger* for Chanticleer, *The Transformation of Jane Doe* for Chicago Opera Theater, and *My Dearest Ruth* for voice and piano with text by the husband of the late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

MICHAEL GILBERTSON

The works of Michael Gilbertson have been described as "elegant" and "particularly beautiful" by the *New York Times*, "vivid, tightly woven" and "delectably subtle" by the *Baltimore Sun*, "genuinely moving" by the *Washington Post*, and "a compelling fusion of new and ancient" by the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Gilbertson is the BMI Composer in Residence with the San Francisco Chamber Orchestra and is a professor at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. He was a finalist for the 2018 Pulitzer Prize in Music for his Quartet. His works have been programmed by the Minnesota Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony, Washington National Opera, Albany Symphony, and San Francisco Chamber Orchestra, among many others.

NILOUFAR NOURBAKHSH

Described as "stark" by WNPR, and "darkly lyrical" by the *New York Times*, winner of the 2nd Hildegard competition, and recipient of the 2019 Female Discovery Grant from Opera America, Iranian composer Niloufar Nourbakhsh's music has been commissioned and performed by the Nashville Symphony Orchestra, Library of Congress, National Sawdust Ensemble, International Contemporary Ensemble, Women Composers Festival of Hartford, PUBLIQuartet, Forward Music Project, and many more, performed at numerous festivals and venues including Carnegie Hall and The Kennedy Center. A founding member and co-director of Iranian Female Composers Association, Nilou is a strong advocate of music education.

THEO CHANDLER

Theo Chandler is the recipient of the Copland House Residency Award, SCI/ASCAP Graduate Commission, American Prize for Vocal Chamber Music, Lili Boulanger Memorial Fund Award, Charles Ives Scholarship from the Academy of Arts and Letters, and the Graduate Music Award from the Presser Foundation. He has received commissions from the New York Youth Symphony First Music Program, Tanglewood Music Center, Fischer Duo, Utah Arts Festival, and others. He has been a fellow at the Britten-Pears Young Artist Programme, Mizzou International Composers Festival, Tanglewood Music Center, Copland House Cultivate, and Aspen Music Festival. Previous residencies include Composer in Residence for Les Délices, Composer in Residence for the Maryland Wind Festival, Fellow for Musiqua, and more.

JEFF SCOTT

A native of Queens, NY, Jeff Scott started the French horn at age 14, receiving an anonymous gift scholarship to go to the Brooklyn College Preparatory Division. An even greater gift came from his first teacher, Carolyn Clark, who taught the young Mr. Scott for free during his high school years, giving him the opportunity to study music when resources were not available. Associate Professor of Horn at the Oberlin Conservatory, Mr. Scott's performance credits are many and varied, including The Lion King orchestra (on Broadway, New York) 1997-2005. He has been a member of the Alvin Ailey and Dance Theater of Harlem orchestras since 1995 and has performed under the direction of Wynton Marsalis with the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra. Mr. Scott is also the French hornist in the internationally acclaimed wind quintet "Imani Winds."

MARSHA MUSIC

Marsha Music, daughter of a pre-Motown record producer, grew up in Highland Park and lives in the Palmer Park district of Detroit. She is a self-described Detroitist and writes about the city's music, its past, present and future. She is a former activist/labor leader and a noted speaker. She has contributed to significant Detroit narratives, including "Untold Tales, Unsung Heroes: An Oral History of Detroit's African American Community," as well as documentaries on HBO, PBS, and The History Channel. Ms. Music has read her poetry with the DSO; written and performed new poetry with the Detroit Opera Theater as part of their 2020 Drive-Thru opera, *Twilight: Gods*. She recently published her first book, "The Detroitist."